

# Doing it for the kids

Imagine you're a child or a teenager whose parents, for one reason or another, have lost custody of you and maybe your siblings.

Say Child Protective Services has decided to remove you from your home – and a judge agreed – because Dad beats up on Mom and sometimes the kids and she refuses to leave him. Or both Mom and Dad have been arrested for drug possession, or are known to suffer from sort of addiction that renders them incapable of feeding or even clothing you. Or maybe Dad, a single parent, has lost his job and, no longer able to provide for you or your brothers and sisters, has abandoned his family.

Whatever the reason, you've suddenly found yourself in the foster care system. If you're lucky, you'll be placed with one of the few available foster families somewhere here in Inyo County, but most likely you'll be shipped to some unknown town or city for an indeterminate length of stay in a group home full of young people you've never met.

Along with the shock and turmoil of your abrupt displacement and the grief and separation anxiety accompanying your sudden estrangement with your parents, you'll likely experience a longing for the familiar – whether it be teachers or classmates, scenery, friends or even Inyo County caseworkers.

Maybe your confusion and need for comfort in any shape or form will manifest in "acting out" – cries for attention that escalate into discipline problems. Those discipline problems, of course, soon become a ticket out of your foreign group home in the form of a trip to the Inyo County Juvenile Detention Facility.

According to the local Foster Care Commission, this scenario is, unfortunately, all-too common, and it's just one of many reasons the Commission is working diligently to 1) recruit more willing and able foster parents and families so that youth don't have to be shipped out of the area after already having been removed from their homes, and 2) establish a local group home for foster kids so that, even when families aren't available to take them in, these youth have a place to go in their own community that they can share with people they know.

Becoming a foster parent in Inyo County doesn't take all that much in light of what's being given in return. Property inspections must be passed, CPR and First-Aid courses taken, a thick packet of paperwork completed – but help is there every step of the way and the rewards of providing aid and comfort and stability to a child in distress easily outweigh any inconvenience or red tape that must be endured.

Much credit goes out to those in the Eastern Sierra who open their hearts and homes to foster children, and kudos are also due the Foster Care Commission for its commitment and efforts to improve the local system for youth.

As the Commission's work progresses and, hopefully, more eligible foster parents step forward, several community groups are in the meantime helping to ease the discomfort of youth in distress and they, too, deserve our gratitude and praise.

Several local residents not too long ago crafted quilts for foster kids as part of the Loving Stitches program and the Bishop Sunrise Rotary Club recently donated backpacks and duffle bags to Health and Human Services for these youth.

Both endeavors are part of the effort to give children and teens in foster care a sense of ownership and dignity after seemingly having lost everything.

And if the community continues to offer support such as this, these youth will come to learn their losses so far don't have to mean loss of the future.

*(Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the Editorial Board of The Inyo Register, consisting of Editor Darcy Ellis and Publisher Dave Balcom. Signed opinions reflect the opinion of the authors.)*